

first nest. A week later, i.e. on January 19, 2000, a second abandoned nest was found; no hen or chicks were seen; the eggshells lying nearby were collected.

Another nest with a hen brooding a clutch of two eggs was located on January 19, 2000 about 25 m away. The breeding season of the species is March to August. (HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN; Ali, Sálim and S. Dillon Ripley, 1987, Vol. 3, Pp. 182). In this

case, the eggs were being hatched in December and January, suggesting that the species breeds in winter in this region.

March 31, 2000

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13. SIGHTING OF A RUFIOUS-NECKED STINT *CALIDRIS RUFICOLLIS* (PALLAS) IN WEST BENGAL, INDIA

On September 17, 1999, while observing a mixed flock of over 1,000 waders on the tidal mudflats of the alluvial Divar island in the inland-estuary of the Mandovi, Tiswadi tal, North Goa district, Goa, c.15 km up the mouth of the river, an odd wader caught our interest. For more than 15 minutes, we observed through 30 x 60 and 60 x 78 spotter-scopes, the mostly immobile bird and compared it with numerous curlew sandpipers *Calidris ferruginea*, little stints *C. minuta*, and broad-billed sandpipers *Limicola falcinellus* that were surrounding it.

Plumage: Virtually identical to little stint but markings less contrasting; pale V-shaped mark on mantle less distinct; crown less grizzled; buff wash on sides of breast stronger.

Size: Markedly longer than little stint; almost as large as broad-billed sandpiper, sometimes appearing as large as some of them. Distinctly stocky, plumper and heavier than the comparatively sleek little stint, like a half-grown red knot *C. canutus*.

Our observations of the plumage conform with those of Hayman *et al.* (1988) and Grimmett *et al.* (1998) for the non-breeding plumage of the rufous-necked stint which, however, are not conclusively identifying. It was the measurements that made us sure of the identity of this enigmatic wader.

TABLE I
COMPARATIVE MEASUREMENTS OF SMALL WADERS

	Body length w/o bill (Hayman <i>et al.</i> 1988)	Average weight (Ali & Ripley)
Little stint	102-122, ave. 112 mm	20.6 g
Rufous-necked stint	112-142, ave. 127 mm	24.0 g
Broad-billed sandpiper	128-148, ave. 138 mm	32.2 g

The average weights given by Ali and Ripley (1983) might be misleading, since they were taken for each species in different seasons. However, Snow and Perrins (1998) state that the rufous-necked stint is, on an average, 30% heavier than the little stint. This, in connection with the rufous-necked stint's slightly shorter tarsus, accounts for the remarkable stockiness of the bird we had observed.

The rufous-necked stint, long considered conspecific with the little stint, is known to winter in SE Asia and Australasia, and in our region it is a scarce but regular winter visitor to the shores of Bangladesh and India's east coast. Our sighting is the first record of this species on the west coast.

November 9, 1999

GORDON FROST
Shanu Smruti, Kudach Wada,
Arpora 403 518, Goa, India.
HEINZ LAINER
Praias de St. Antonio,
Anjuna 403 509, Goa, India.

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14. OCCURRENCE AND ASSOCIATION OF RED-NECKED PHALAROPE *PHALAROPUS LOBATUS* WITH OTHER SPECIES AT SAMBHAR, RAJASTHAN

With its slim graceful body, slender neck, small head, needle-like bill and lobed toes, the red-necked phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* is one of the most distinctive waders. It is an expert swimmer, readily distinguished from other waders by its ability to land on water.

Adam (1874) obtained specimens of this rare bird on September 22 and 25 at Sambhar. According to Ali and Ripley (1980), it has been "recorded from few inland localities on spring and/or autumn passage". Roberts (1991) says they "take flight to the sea coast non-stop, but occasional birds can be encountered on inland lakes or freshwater ponds on passage" and describes the status as "common but only offshore".

The purpose of this note is to report recent sightings of the red-necked phalarope at Sambhar lake and describe its foraging method in association with other feeding birds on passage. Twenty-seven red-necked phalarope were recorded at Kochia ki Dhani, a satellite freshwater wetland of Sambhar Lake on September 9, 1998. Eleven of them were swimming with six little grebe *Podiceps ruficollis* and picking up insects from the surface of the water. The other birds were paddling and spinning to bring prey to the surface.

In the afternoon of February 5, 1999, Denis Parkes, a British bird watcher, and I were watching waders at Kochia ki Dhani, Sambhar. Scanning the birds with my binoculars, I picked out a more lightly built bird and said that I had the red-necked phalarope. We counted 17 red-necked phalaropes on this freshwater pond. All

of them were in 'off' plumage. They were staying in two to three groups around shovellers *Anas clypeata*. They were spinning around picking off flies disturbed by the ducks as they swam. As is customary with the genus when on inland waters, the group was not wary of us.

On September 5, 1999, Harsh Vardhan and I recorded four red-necked phalarope at the same site with seven or eight avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta*, presumably taking advantage of the prey or edible particles brought to the surface, or into view, by foraging avocets in a shallow part of the lake. All the phalaropes were actively following the avocets.

The explanation for this behaviour is that the red-necked phalarope "associate with the other feeding birds probably to benefit from the higher prey availability brought about by disturbance" (del Hoyo *et al.* 1996). According to Cramp and Simmons (1983), the red-necked phalarope feed in this manner "presumably to take advantage of prey brought to surface or into view". Two comprehensive books on the birds of the Subcontinent (Ali and Ripley 1980, and Roberts 1991) describe its feeding methods, but do not record its feeding association with other birds. This note provides additional information on the feeding behaviour of the species in the Indian Subcontinent.

December 16, 1999 HARKIRAT S. SANGHA
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